



*Criteria for  
Evaluating Instructional  
Materials in  
History–Social Science*

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Kindergarten Through  
Grade Eight

California Department of Education  
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# Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials in History–Social Science, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight



This document provides criteria for evaluating the alignment of instructional materials with the *History–Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools* (2000) and the *History–Social Science Framework for California Public Schools (2001 Updated Edition)*. The content standards were adopted by the California State Board of Education in October 1998. They describe what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. The updated

framework was adopted by the State Board of Education in October 2000. It incorporates the standards and includes instructional guidelines. The framework, together with the standards, defines the essential skills and knowledge in history–social science that will enable all California students to enjoy a world-class education.

The instructional materials must provide guidance for the teacher to present the content standards and curriculum at each grade level and to teach students all the analysis skills required for the grade spans. Students should be able to demonstrate reasoning, reflection, and research skills. These skills are to be learned through, and applied to, the content standards and are to be assessed only in conjunction with the content standards. Special attention should also be paid to the appendixes in the framework, which address important overarching issues.

In 2005 the State Board of Education will adopt a new list of history-social science instructional materials for use in kindergarten through grade eight. This adoption and any follow-up adoption prior to 2011 will be guided by the criteria described below. To be adopted, materials must first meet *in full* Category 1, History–Social Science Content/Alignment with Standards. Materials will be evaluated holistically in the other categories of Program Organization, Assessment, Universal Access, and Instructional Planning and Support. (These criteria may also be used by publishers and local educational agencies as a guide for developing and selecting instructional materials for grades nine through twelve.) To assist the State Board in the evaluation of

instructional materials, publishers will use a standards map template supplied by the California Department of Education to demonstrate a program’s alignment with the standards.

The criteria are organized into five categories:

1. **History–Social Science Content/Alignment with Standards:** The content as specified in the *Education Code*, the *History–Social Science Content Standards*, and the *History–Social Science Framework (2001 Updated Edition)*
2. **Program Organization:** The sequence and organization of the history–social science program
3. **Assessment:** The strategies presented in the instructional materials for measuring what students know and are able to do
4. **Universal Access:** Instructional materials that are understandable to all students, including students eligible for special education, English learners, and students whose achievement is either below or above that typical of the class or grade level
5. **Instructional Planning and Support:** The instructional planning and support information and materials, typically including a separate edition specially designed for use by teachers in implementing the *History–Social Science Content Standards* and *History–Social Science Framework*

History–social science instructional materials must support teaching aligned with the standards and framework. Materials that are contrary to or inconsistent with the standards, framework, and criteria are not allowed. Extraneous materials should be minimal and clearly purposeful.

### Category 1: History–Social Science Content/Alignment with Standards

1. Instructional materials, as defined in *Education Code* Section 60010(h), provide instruction designed to ensure that students master all the *History–Social Science Content Standards* for the intended grade level. Analysis skills of the pertinent grade span must be covered at each grade level.
2. Instructional materials reflect and incorporate the content of the *History–Social Science Framework*.
3. Instructional materials shall use proper grammar and spelling (*Education Code* Section 60045).
4. Instructional materials present accurate, detailed content and a variety of perspectives.
5. History is presented as a story well told, with continuity and narrative coherence (a beginning, a middle, and an end), and based on the best recent scholarship. Without sacrificing historical accuracy, the narrative is rich with the forceful personalities, controversies, and issues of the

time. Primary sources, such as letters, diaries, documents, and photographs, are incorporated into the narrative to present an accurate and vivid picture of the times.

6. Materials include sufficient use of primary sources appropriate to the age level of students so that students understand from the words of the authors the way people saw themselves, their work, their ideas and values, their assumptions, their fears and dreams, and their interpretation of their own times. These sources are to be integral to the program and are carefully selected to exemplify the topic. They serve as a voice from the past, conveying an accurate and thorough sense of the period. When only an excerpt of a source is included in the materials, the students and teachers are referred to the entire primary source. The materials present different perspectives of participants, both ordinary and extraordinary people, in world and U.S. history.
7. Materials include the study of issues and historical and social science debates. Students are presented with different perspectives and come to understand the importance of reasoned debate and reliable evidence, recognizing that people in a democratic society have the right to disagree.
8. Throughout the instructional resources the importance of the variables of time and place, when and where, and history and geography is stressed repeatedly. In examining the past and present, the instructional resources consistently help students recognize that events and changes occur in a specific time and place. Instructional resources also consistently help students judge the significance of the relative location of place.
9. The history–social science curriculum is enriched with various genres of fiction and nonfiction literature of and about the historical period. Forms of literature such as diaries, essays, biographies, autobiographies, myths, legends, historical tales, oral literature, poetry, and religious literature richly describe the issues or the events studied as well as the life of the people, including both work and leisure activities.
10. Materials on religious subject matter remain neutral; do not advocate one religion over another; do not include simulation or role playing of religious ceremonies or beliefs; do not include derogatory language about a religion or use examples from sacred texts or other religious literature that are derogatory, accusatory, or instill prejudice against other religions or those who believe in other religions.
11. Numerous examples are presented of women and men from different demographic groups who used their learning and intelligence to make important contributions to democratic practices and society and to science and technology. Materials emphasize the importance of education in a democratic society.

12. For grades six through eight, the breadth and depth of world history to be covered are described in the updated *History–Social Science Framework* in Appendix D, “The World History Sequence at Grades Six, Seven, and Ten: Content, Breadth/Depth, and Coverage Issues with Some Local Options.” In addition to the content called for at grade six, instructional materials shall include the grade seven content standards on the Roman Empire (standard 7.1 and its sequence) and Mayan civilization (standard 7.7 and the applicable Mayan aspects of the sequence). In addition to the content called for at grade eight, materials shall include the grade seven content standards on the Age of Exploration, the Enlightenment, and the Age of Reason (standard 7.11 and its sequence).
13. For kindergarten through grade three, instructional materials are distinguished by the inclusion of literature that brings alive people and events for children and teaches ethics, values, and civic responsibility. The literary selections are broadly representative of varied cultures, ethnic groups, men, women, and children and, where appropriate, provide meaningful connections to the other content standards: English–language arts, mathematics, science, and visual and performing arts.
14. Student writing assignments are aligned with the grade-level expectations in the *English–Language Arts Content Standards* (adopted by the State Board of Education in 1997) under the strands “Writing” and “Written and Oral English Language Conventions.”
15. Instructional materials use biography to portray the experiences of men, women, children, and youths. Where the standards call for examples (or use “e.g.”), materials shall go beyond the listed examples and include the roles and contributions of people from different demographic groups: American Indians, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, and members of other ethnic and cultural groups (*Education Code* Section 60040).
16. Instructional materials, where appropriate, present the contributions of the entrepreneur and labor in the total development of California and the United States (*Education Code* sections 51009 and 60040).
17. Instructional materials, where appropriate and called for in the standards, include examples of religious and secular thinkers in history. All materials must be in accordance with the guidance provided in the updated *History–Social Science Framework*, Appendix C, “Religion and the Teaching of History–Social Science,” and *Education Code* sections 51500, 51501, 51511, and 51513. The rites and practices of religions must be respected and must not be reenacted or simulated in any manner. When U.S. history is examined, religious matters, both belief and nonbelief, must be treated respectfully and be explained as protected by the U.S. Constitution.

18. Instructional materials, where appropriate, examine humanity's place in ecological systems and the necessity for the protection of the environment (*Education Code* Section 60041).
19. Instructional materials for grades five and eight shall include a discussion of the Great Irish Famine of 1845–1850 and the effect of the famine on American history (*Education Code* Section 51226.3[c]).
20. Emphasis is placed on civic values, democratic principles, and democratic institutions, including frequent opportunities for discussion of the fundamental principles embodied in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. When appropriate to the comprehension of pupils, instructional materials shall include a copy of the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence (*Education Code* Section 60043).
21. Materials emphasize America's multiethnic heritage and its contribution to this country's development while explaining how American civic values provide students with a foundation for understanding their rights and responsibilities in this pluralistic society (*Education Code* sections 51226.5 and 60200.6).
22. Materials on American life and history give significant attention to the principles of morality, truth, justice, and patriotism and to a comprehension of the rights, duties, and dignity of American citizenship, inspiring an understanding of and a commitment to American ideals. Examples of memorable addresses by historical figures are presented in their historical context, including the effect of those addresses on people then and now (*Education Code* sections 52720 and 60200.5).
23. Materials for studying the life and contributions of Cesar E. Chavez and the history of the farm labor movement and of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the civil rights movement shall be included at each grade level, with suggestions for supporting the respective holidays in honor of those men and the accompanying activities (*Education Code* sections 51008 and 60200.6, respectively).
24. Any gross inaccuracies or deliberate falsifications revealed during the review process will result in disqualification, and any found during the adoption cycle will be subject to removal of the program from the list of state-adopted textbooks. Gross inaccuracies and deliberate falsifications are defined as those requiring changes in content.
25. All authors listed in the instructional program are held responsible for the content. If requested, the authors must be willing to supply proof of authorship. Beyond the title and publishing company's name, the only name to appear on a cover and title page shall be the actual author or authors.

## Category 2: Program Organization

1. Sequential organization of the material provides structure concerning what students should learn each year and allows teachers to convey the history–social science content efficiently and effectively.
2. The content is well organized and presented in a manner consistent with providing all students an opportunity to achieve the essential knowledge and skills described in the standards and framework. The academic language (i.e., vocabulary) specific to the content is presented in a manner that provides explicit instructional opportunities for teachers and appropriate practice for all students.
3. A detailed, expository narrative approach providing for in-depth study is the predominant writing mode and focuses on people and their ideas, thoughts, actions, conflicts, struggles, and achievements.
4. Explanations are provided so that students clearly understand the likely causes of the events, the reasons the people and events are important, why things turned out as they did, and the connections of those results to events that followed.
5. The narrative unifies and interrelates the many facts, explanations, visual aids, maps, and literary selections included in the topic or unit. Those components clearly contribute directly to students' deeper understanding and retention of the events.
6. The relevant grade-level standards shall be explicitly stated in both the teacher and student editions. Topical headings reflect the framework and standards and clearly indicate the content that follows.
7. Each topic builds clearly on the preceding one(s) in a systematic manner.
8. Topics selected for in-depth study are enriched with a variety of materials and content-appropriate activities and reflect the framework's course descriptions.
9. Each unit presents strategies for universal access, including ways in which to improve the vocabulary and reading and language skills of English learners in the context of history–social science.
10. Materials explain how history–social science instruction may be improved by the effective use of library media centers and information literacy skills.
11. The tables of contents, indexes, glossaries, content summaries, and assessment guides are designed to help teachers, parents/guardians, and students.

## Category 3: Assessment

1. Assessment tools measure what students know and are able to do, including their analysis skills, as defined by the standards.



2. Assessment tools that publishers include as a part of their instructional materials should provide evidence of students' progress toward mastering the content called for in the standards and framework and should yield information teachers can use in planning and modifying instruction to help all students meet or exceed the standards.
3. Materials provide frequent assessments at strategic points of instruction by such means as pretests, unit tests, chapter tests, and summative tests.
4. Materials assess students' progress toward meeting the instructional goals of history–social science, most notably by expository writing. Student writing assessments are aligned with the grade-level requirements in the *English–Language Arts Content Standards* under the strands “Writing” and “Written and Oral English Language Conventions.”
5. Materials include analytical rubrics that are content-specific and provide an explanation of the use of the rubrics by teachers and students to evaluate and improve skills in writing, analysis, and the use of evidence.
6. Assessment tools include multiple-choice, short answer, essay, and oral presentation.
7. Assessment tools measure how students are able to use library media centers and information literacy skills when studying history–social science topics.

#### Category 4: Universal Access

1. Instructional materials shall provide access to the curriculum for all students. Therefore, the following design principles for perceptual alternatives shall be used:
  - To be consistent with federal copyright law, all text for students must be in digital format so that it can easily be transcribed, reproduced, modified, and distributed in braille, large print (only if the publisher does not offer such an edition), recordings, American Sign Language videos for the deaf, or other specialized accessible media exclusively for use by pupils with visual disabilities or other disabilities that prevent the use of standard materials.
  - Written captions and written descriptions must be in digital format for audio portions of visual instructional materials, such as video-tapes (for those students who are deaf or hearing impaired).
  - Educationally relevant descriptions must be provided for those images, graphic devices, or pictorial information essential to the teaching of key concepts. (When key information is presented solely in graphic or pictorial form, it limits access for students who are blind or who have low vision. Digital images with an oral description provide not only access for those students but also flexibility for instructional emphasis, clarity, and direction.)



2. Instructional materials present comprehensive guidance for teachers in providing effective, efficient instruction for all students. Instructional materials should provide access to the standards and framework-based curriculum for all students, including those with special needs: English learners, advanced learners, students below grade level in reading and writing skills, and special education students.
3. Materials for kindergarten through grade three focus on the content called for in the *History–Social Science Content Standards* and the *History–Social Science Framework* while complementing the goals of the *English–Language Arts Content Standards* and the *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools* (adopted in 1999).
4. Materials for grades four through eight provide suggestions to further instruction in history–social science while assisting students whose reading and writing skills are below grade level.
5. Instructional materials are designed to help meet the needs of students whose reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills fall below the level prescribed in the English–language arts content standards and to assist in accelerating students’ skills to grade level. Those students whose skills are *significantly* below grade level in reading (two years or more) should be directed to intensive reading instruction.
6. Materials must address the needs of students who are at or above grade level. Although materials are adaptable to each student’s point of entry, such differentiated instruction is focused on the history–social science content standards.
7. All suggestions and procedures for meeting the instructional needs of all students are ready to use with minimum modifications.
8. Materials provide suggestions for enriching the program or assignments for advanced learners by:
  - Studying a topic, person, place, or event in more depth
  - Conducting a more complex analysis of a topic, person, place, or event
  - Reading and researching related topics independently
  - Emphasizing the rigor and depth of the analysis skills to provide a challenge for all students
9. Materials provide suggestions to help teach English learners the *History–Social Science Content Standards* while reinforcing instruction based on the *English–Language Arts Content Standards*—notably to read, write, comprehend, and speak at academically proficient levels.
10. Materials use the following design principles for “considerate” text:
  - Adequate titles for each selection
  - Introductory subheadings for chapter sections
  - Introductory paragraphs
  - Concluding or summary paragraphs

- Complete paragraphs, including a clear topic sentence, relevant support, and transitional words and expressions (e.g., *furthermore*, *similarly*)
- Effective use of typographical aids, such as boldface print, italics
- Relevant, standards-aligned visual aids connected to the print: illustrations, photographs, charts, graphs, maps
- Manageable instead of overwhelming visual and print stimuli
- Identification and highlighting of important terms
- List of objectives or focus questions at the beginning of each selection
- List of follow-up comprehension and application questions

### Category 5: Instructional Planning and Support

1. Teacher support materials, including the required teacher edition, are built into the instructional materials and contain suggestions and illustrative examples of how teachers can implement the instructional program.
2. The teacher and student editions present ways for all students to learn the content and analysis skills called for in the standards.
3. Directions are explicit regarding how the analysis skills are to be taught and assessed in the context of the content standards.
4. Instructional materials provide a clear road map for teachers to follow when they are planning instruction.
5. Teacher and student editions have correlating page numbers.
6. Instructional materials include a teacher-planning guide describing the relationships between the components of the program and how to use all the components to meet all the standards.
7. Publishers provide teachers with easily accessible and workable instructional examples and with practice opportunities for students as they develop their understanding of the content and analysis skills.
8. Blackline masters are accessible in print and in digitized formats and are easily reproduced. Black areas shall be minimal to require less toner when printing or photocopying.
9. The teacher's edition describes what to teach, how to teach, and when to teach.
10. Terms from the standards are used appropriately and accurately in the instructions.
11. All assessment tools, instructional tools, and informational technology resources include technical support and suggestions for appropriate use of technology.
12. Electronic learning resources, when included, support instruction and connect explicitly to the standards.

13. The teacher resource materials provide background information about important events, people, places, and ideas appearing in the standards and framework.
14. Instructional practices recommended in the materials are based on the content in the standards and on current and confirmed research.
15. Materials discuss and address common misconceptions held by students.
16. Homework extends and reinforces classroom instruction and provides additional practice of skills that have been taught.
17. Materials include suggestions on how to explain students' progress toward attaining the standards.
18. Materials include suggestions for parents on how to support student achievement.
19. The format clearly distinguishes instructions for teachers from those for students.
20. Answer keys are provided for all workbooks and other related student activities.
21. Publishers provide charts of the time requirements and cost of staff development services available for preparing teachers to implement fully the program.
22. Materials provide teachers with instructions on how outside resources (e.g., guest speakers, museum visits, and electronic field trips) are to be incorporated into a standards-based lesson.
23. Materials provide guidance on the effective use of library media centers to improve instruction and on the materials in library media centers that would best complement the history–social science content standards.

## Selected References

*History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2000.

*History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2001 Updated Edition.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001.

*English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1998.

*Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1999.

*Mathematics Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1999.

*Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2000 Revised Edition.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2000.

*Science Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2000.

*Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2003.

*Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, Prekindergarten Through Grade Twelve.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001.